

WILLIAM DEAN REESE

(1928–2002)

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William Dean Reese, 'Bill' to family members and his many friends, died, age 73, on 4 February 2002 in Lafayette, Louisiana after a short battle with cancer.

Bill was born in Baltimore, Maryland on 10 September 1928. His formative years were spent on a dairy farm, and as a result he always considered himself a 'farm boy at heart.' Perhaps as a result of his experiences on the farm Bill had a practical approach to life and an unquenchable appreciation for nature. This view never left him. Bill strived to pass this view on to his children and grandchildren. Realizing that his children and grandchildren would never experience the joys of farm life he decided to record memories of his years on the farm, primarily for their benefit. These memories were privately published in 1997 as *Lone Hickory. Reminiscences from the Reese Farm at Gwynnbrook, Maryland, 1930s-1940s*, with corrections made in 1998.

Bill enrolled in the University of Maryland in 1945, but his undergraduate studies were interrupted by two tours in the United States Army. In 1946–48, as a member of the Signal Corps, he was stationed in the Philippines; between 1950–51 he was a cook in Fort Hood, Texas. Bill's great love of cooking (and eating!) good food was perhaps initiated by this experience. In 1953 Bill was graduated from the University of Maryland with a B.S. in Botany. It was during his undergraduate studies that Bill's interest in bryophytes was piqued. In one of his biological science laboratories Bill observed the release of living antherozoids from moss antheridia, an observation that led to his second bryological publication, *On observing bryophyte antherozoids* (*Bryologist* 58:335–336. 1955). In the Fall of 1953 Bill began graduate studies in bryology at Florida State University under Dr. Ruth S. Breen, graduating with an M.S. in Botany in 1955 and a Ph.D. in Botany in 1957.

Upon graduation, Bill was offered and accepted an appointment as Assistant Professor of Biology at The University of Southwestern Louisiana (now The University of Louisiana at Lafayette). He remained at this university throughout his 30-year professional career, advancing to Associate Professor (1962) and Professor (1966). Bill was an outstanding teacher and served as primary advisor to 11 graduate students. In 1970 he was named *University of Southwest Louisi-*



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ana Foundation Distinguished Professor. Upon his retirement in 1987 the University appointed him *Edwin L. Stephens Honor Professor Emeritus*, an appointment he held until his death. In addition to his teaching responsibilities, Bill served the University and Biology Department as an able administrator: Chairman of the Biology Department (1974–77) and Department Head (1981–86).

Bill was a towering figure in American bryology. His primary interest centered on the tropical/subtropical family Calymperaceae. His studies on this family began with his Ph.D. dissertation and continued for the remainder of his life. Never tiring of these mosses, he delved into their systematics and phylogeny, the evolution and functional morphology of their asexual reproduction, and the evolution of their niche specificity. At his death he left an incomplete manuscript, *Fertility in Calymperaceae: Calymperes, Mitthyridium and Syrrhopodon*. Bill's interest in bryology, however, was not limited to the Calymperaceae. He was also a superb floristic bryologist with particular interest in the mosses of the southern United States. His book *Mosses of the Gulf Coast*, which treats the species from the Rio Grande (southern Texas) to the Apalachicola River (western Florida), is the standard floristic work for that region.

Throughout his career, Bill had a total of 154 bryological publications.

Bill was a consummate botanist. Although his principal interests lay in bryology, Bill was an acknowledged authority on the taxonomy of vascular plants. He took great delight in showing visitors the many interesting native flowering plants he had transplanted around his home. His professional interest in vascular plants led to the publication of several papers as well as the book *Acadiana Flora. Native and Naturalized Woody Plants of South-Central Louisiana*, completed with his long-time colleague at the university, Garrie Landry. At the time of his death he was working on another book., *Mamou: Acadian Folklore, Natural History, and Botany of Erythrina herbacea L.*, with Charles Allen, a former graduate student. Away from botany, he had considerable knowledge of fungi, particularly the basidiomycetes, and was an avid ornithologist, delighting in pointing out to visitors the many spectacular birds native to southern Louisiana.

Bill and a colleague, John Thieret, were the first (and only) botanists to complete an exhaustive survey of the vascular flora of the five 'salt domes' [Bell Island, Cote Blanche Island (accessible only by boat), Weeks Island, Avery Island, and Jefferson Island] located along the Louisiana coast. The results of this survey were published as *Botanical Study of the Five Islands of Louisiana*. Bill was immensely proud of his part in this exploratory work and continued to revisit the accessible areas long after the survey was completed.

Bill found great enjoyment in field work. Collecting specimens of bryophytes and vascular plants was one of his great pleasures and greatly enhanced his research. In addition to collecting extensively in North America he also participated in expeditions to Mexico, the Amazon Basin in South America, the

West Indies, Australia, and China. His earliest recorded collection, a specimen of *Quercus falcata* Michx., was made just outside Tallahassee, Florida in August 1955, and his last identified collection (*Reese 18,593*), *Pseudoleskeella tectorum* (Brid.) Kindb., was made in Otero County, New Mexico on 15 June 2000. These collections (numbering about 35,000 specimens) are now in MO and are available for study. Eventually the collections will be intercalated in the Crosby Bryophyte Herbarium (MO). Record books and journals are also on file at MO.

In addition to his duties as teacher, researcher and administrator, Bill was an exceptional editor. Although he was exacting and had little patience with foolishness, he balanced his criticisms with encouragement and insightful comments, a reflection of his quiet and even nature. When a manuscript was returned by Bill one could be certain that it was considerably improved, regardless of how many times it had been edited previously. Bill was twice Editor of *The Bryologist* (1970–74; 1988–1995), and Associate Editor of *The Bryologist* (1977–1980), and an editor for and an unwavering supporter of the *Bryophyte Flora of North America* project, for which before his death he completed manuscripts in the Brachytheciaceae, Calymperaceae, Cryphaeaceae, Hypnaceae, Leucodontaceae, Leucophanaceae, Meteoriaceae, Pterobryaceae, Ptychomitriaceae, Racopilaceae, and Splachnobryaceae.

Bill served The American Bryological and Lichenological Society as Secretary-Treasurer (1969–1970), Vice-President (1977–1979), and President (1979–1981). In addition, Bill was a member of the American Association for the Advancement of Science, Association of Southeastern Biologists, British Bryological Society, International Association of Bryologists, International Association for Plant Taxonomy, Nordisk Bryologisk Forening, Sociedad Latinoamericana de Briología, Society of the Sigma Xi, and a charter member of the Hedwigian Society (Missouri Botanical Garden). In 1988 he was appointed a Research Associate by the Missouri Botanical Garden.

Bill is survived by his wife, Lorelle, two daughters, Jean Harvill and Christine Proctor, twin sons, David and William, and five grandsons.

Bryology has lost one of its pre-eminent students, his family a loving and wonderful husband, father and grandfather, and those of us who knew him well, a faithful and loyal friend.

The tribute to Bill published in *Bryologist* 105(4):625–634. 2002 [2003] includes a list of taxa associated with Bill, and a bibliography of his botanical publications.